

# Personal hygiene for people working with food

## Don't let your food turn nasty!

Food poisoning is a serious health problem. It can cause severe illness and even death.

Food poisoning can seriously damage the reputation of a business, damage the reputation of the food industry and damage the jobs of many workers.

As a person who handles food—whether you are a kitchen hand, a food process worker, a shop assistant or a waiter—you have an important responsibility to handle food safely. So:

- protect other people from getting sick.
- protect your reputation in the food industry.
- protect your business.
- protect your job.

Victorian and Australian food safety laws are designed to ensure that food that is sold is safe to eat and free of any contamination.

All Victorian businesses and organisations that make, display, transport or prepares food for sale must be registered with a local Council or in some cases with PrimeSafe or Dairy Food Safety Victoria. Except for specific exemptions, every business must also comply with Victorian food laws including having a Food Safety Program and having a Food Safety Supervisor.

## Prevent food poisoning by practicing good personal hygiene:

- ☒ Thoroughly wash and dry your hands before handling food, and wash and dry them again frequently during work.
- ☒ Dry your hands with clean towels, disposable paper towels or under an air dryer.
- ☒ Never smoke, chew gum, spit, change a baby's nappy or eat in a food handling or food storage area.
- ☒ Never cough or sneeze over food or where food is prepared or stored.
- ☒ Wear clean protective clothing, like an apron.
- ☒ Keep your spare clothes and other personal items away from where food is stored and prepared.
- ☒ If you have long hair, tie it back or cover it.
- ☒ Keep your nails short so they are easy to clean, don't wear nail polish which can chip into the food.
- ☒ Avoid wearing jewellery, only wear plain banded rings and sleeper earrings.
- ☒ If you have cuts or wounds, make sure they are completely covered by a waterproof wound strip or a bandage. Use brightly coloured wound strips, so they can be easily seen if they fall off.
- ☒ Wear disposable gloves over the top of the wound strip if you have wounds on your hands.
- ☒ Change disposable gloves regularly.
- ☒ Don't handle food if you feel unwell, advise your supervisor.
- ☒ Follow the business Food Safety Program.
- ☒ Follow the advice given by the Food Safety Supervisor.
- ☒ Be trained in safe food handling.

## Personal hygiene

An important way to prevent food contamination is to maintain a high standard of personal hygiene and cleanliness.

Even healthy people carry food poisoning bacteria on their bodies. By touching parts of your body, such as your nose, mouth, hair and including your clothes, you can spread bacteria from your hands to the food.

Good personal hygiene is not only essential to prevent the contamination of food; it also makes good business sense. Customers like to see food handling staff who take hygiene seriously and practice safe food handling. Put yourself in their place and watch how your workmates handle food. Would you want to eat at or buy food from your business?

## Wash your hands thoroughly

Washing your hands thoroughly is a good way to reduce the chance of contaminating food with bacteria.

Wash your hands with soap and warm water and don't forget the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.

Thoroughly dry your hands immediately after you wash them. Always dry your hands with a clean towel, disposable paper towel or under an air dryer, not on a tea towel and never on your clothes.

Wash your hands after:

- Going to the toilet.
- Handling raw food.
- Blowing your nose.
- Handling garbage.
- Touching your ears, nose, mouth or other parts of the body.
- Smoking.
- Every break.
- Handling animals.

If you are wearing disposable gloves change them regularly, the same as you would wash your hands. Wash and dry your hands before putting on gloves.

## Illness

You must not work when you are suffering from illnesses which are likely to be transmitted through food. These include gastroenteritis (often called 'gastro'), hepatitis A and hepatitis E.

You must advise your supervisor if you are feeling unwell.

You should not return to work if you are suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea. Don't return to work until your symptoms have stopped for 48 hours. If you are unsure, you should contact your doctor for advice.

## Food handlers require skills and knowledge

All food handlers need to know how the work they do can affect the safety of the food.

The Australian Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 (*Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*), require that people who handle food must have the appropriate skills and knowledge for the work they do.

Food handlers need to know:

- How to locate and follow workplace information about their own food handling operations;
- How to identify and correct (or report) situations or procedures that do not meet the business's Food Safety Program;
- Who the Food Safety Supervisor is; and
- Their responsibilities in regard to health and hygiene requirements.

Food handlers should consider formal food safety training to enhance their skills and knowledge.

## More information

The Department of Human Services Food Safety Unit has a range of resources on safe food handling available from the website [www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety) or by contacting 1300 364 352.

Local councils can also provide advice about personal hygiene and food handler skills and knowledge.

The National Training Information Service provides information on food safety competencies, industry training packages and registered training organisations on the website [www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)